

402. 13
The Innocent Cause of the People called Quakers in the North of Scotland, who are under great Sufferings, laid open;
and Presented to the King and His Council in Scotland, and to all Inferior Magistrates,
Judges, and Rulers, who have a hand in our present Sufferings.

Whereas we the People, called in-scorn Quakers, in the North of Scotland, especially in the Shires of *Aberden* and *Merne*, are under great sufferings, both of long Imprisonment, and spoiling our Goods; which if continued upon us, may turn to the utter ruine of our Families: for many of us have now suffered above ten Months Imprisonment; several of which are poor Labourers, and Tradesmen; and our Goods spoiled and taken away, from most of us to the double, and from divers of us to the treble of the Fines imposed upon us: And in the Cold Winter season, our Prison cannot admit of any Fire, and is destitute of many other necessary accommodations; not to mention many other severities and hardships we have, and do daily meet with from the fury and prejudice of inferior Magistrates and Keepers. Therefore we have found it our duty to lay before you, especially the King and His Counsel, our innocent cause, and so to leave it with you before the Lord, for whom we suffer, and to whose good and holy Will we are resigned, and freely given up to endure, whatever he shall be pleased to permit to come upon us; as most certainly believing, it shall work for his Glory, the prosperity of his truth, and the comfort of our Immortal Souls.

The alledged grounds and reasons of our present sufferings are, because we join not with the National Worship and Ministry, and that we meet together among our selves, and some of us do speak and pray at sometimes in these Meetings, without a Licence from the Bishop of the Diocese; which is contrary, as is alledged, to divers Acts of Parliament. To this we have answered, and do at present answer, that we do not understand our selves to be transgrefors of these Acts: for none of these Acts, although made since we were a gathered People in this Nation, do mention us; nor doth the ground and reason of these Acts reach us, being made to prevent all sedition, plotting, and insurrection, against the present Government; and for preserving the outward peace of the Nation: whereas it is abundantly known, that our principles and practices universally, are most peaceable, and tend to nothing but the universal peace and quiet of the Nation: for as to our principles in relation to the King as the suprem Magistrate, we hold it our duty to live in all godliness and quietnes under him, to pray for him, and to give him what is his, as Christ did teach, saying, *Give unto Caesar what is Cesars; and to God what Gods.* And we are of the same Faith that the primitive Christians were of, both in the Apostles days, and long after, that we ought not to resist the Magistrate by force of Arms, or any Military resistance, not in our own defence, but in the patient and meek spirit of the Gospel, to suffer the wrath of men, even when we are innocent, and have done nothing worthy of punishment; and our practice always since we were a people, hath answered most agreeably to our principle: So that nothing hath ever been found among us, either in this Nation, or any other Nation where the Lord hath raised us up, to give the least ground of jealousy; as if we were not peaceable, or were obnoxious to the present Government.

And it being thus with us, as towards the Magistrate, we acknowledging the King to be suprem, and that active or passive Obedience is to be given to his Commands by all his Subjects universally, why should any seek to incroach upon the peaceable exercize of our tender Consciences, or to limit the Spirit of God, and his divine movings and workings in our Souls? And we earnestly wish in true love and good-will, both to the King himself, and to all that are in Authority under him, that they may not incroach upon the things that are Gods, to seek to hinder us from giving unto God the things which are Gods, to wit, his true Worship in spirit and in truth; and to answer the pure, holy, and peaceable movings of his spirit in assembling our selves frequently together, and to preach, pray, and give thanks as he doth move and command us: seeing our being thus excused tends only to Righteousness and Peace; and our Meetings are not seditious Conventicles, but Schools of Virtue, and open unto all, to hear and see what is said, or taught among us, where nothing is heard, but what maketh courteous, meek, shamefast, modest, chaste, and tending to good Neighbourhood; as was said concerning the Meetings of the Primitive Christians, and as was confessed by the very Pagans themselves, that they were a Sect troublesome to none; the same can all sober and impartial people that know us, and converse with us, declare concerning us; as we can appeal to all our Neighbours every where among whom we live. Whom did we ever prejudice or injury? and let all sober and impartial people, who have ben present at any time in our Meetings, declare, if the very nature, end, and service of our Meetings, be not the common good of mankind, to turn People from *Darknes to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

And seeing we are perswaded by the spirit of God in our hearts, that the National Worship is not the true way of Worship, that is, in Spirit and in Truth; and that we do not refrain from it in any contempt of Authority, as God is our witness; why should any seek to force or compell us to join thereunto? for the witness of God in our Consciences teacheth us, as also it doth teach all men, that no forced or constrained Worship or Religion is acceptable unto God; to which also, the testimony of the Scriptures do fully agree: for the Lord will have a willing People to serve him, whose own Divine power alone doth, and only can make truly willing, and no other power can do it: And the Lord hath said, *My Son give me thy heart;* but if we should Worship contrary to the perswasion of our hearts, then we should not give our heart unto God; and all constrained and forced Worship by outward power and force, is expressly against the very nature of the Gospel Worship and Obedience; for under the Gospel, we do not receive the spirit of *Bondage again to fear, but the spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.* Therefore we exhort you in tender love and good-will, not to encroach upon the things of God, nor to meddle with the prerogative of Christ Jesus, nor seek to stop and limit his Sovereign Power, Will, and Authority in and over the Consciences of his People: let him set up his Kingdom among you, which will not destroy any just Kingdom, or Government of men, but will indeed establish and confirm it. His Kingdom is not of this world, and therefore it is no *Enemy to the Kingdoms, and righteous Governments of this world:* and if they incroach not upon this Kingdom, he will not only permit them, but blest, prosper, and promote them; whereof many examples can be given out of the holy Scripture.

Now for this cause it is, that we cannot in Conscience own the worlds Teachers to be the true Ministers of Christ Jesus, nor concur to hold up, or countenance their Ministry, even because they neither preach the true Doctrine, nor live the true life of Christ and his Apostles; and therefore it is, that their Ministry, their Preaching and Praying, is so barren, unfruitful, and unprofitable unto their Hearers. They preach not Christ Jesus to be the true Life and Light of all mankind, as he doth inwardly appear, and is revealed of the Father, to quicken and enlighten them, who is the true Light that doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world; and by his divine illumination in the heart of every man, doth convince and reprove of all unrighteousness, and perswade to all righteousness; yea, and by

his power, his spirit and life, powerfully move and encline all unto it, and so should attain to Everlasting Salvation, according to Scriptures testimony. But the worlds Teachers deny the saving universal illumination of Christ Jesus in all men; and tell the People, that the Light in them is not of a saving nature, nor able to lead them unto God, although they should follow it never so diligently; and so they deny the true univeral free grace of God; also they deny the immediate Revelation and Inspiration of the spirit of Christ Jesus in these days, and the immediate teachings of God, which is contrary to the nature and substance of the new Covenant, wherein the Lord hath promised, *that all shall be taught of him:* And although they preach sin and the Devil to be in men, and that the Devil hath his false Prophets, whom he doth inspire; yet they deny that God hath his true Prophets, whom he doth divinely inspire with his divine inspirations in our days, or since the Apostles times, contrary to the promises of God, and the experiences of the Saints in all Ages.

And they preach Christ only without, and his Righteousnes without only; and so they preach only an outward foundation, and outward rule and guide, an outward word and call; whereas the true Apostles and Ministers preached Christ within as well as without; and preached the Law and Word in the heart, and an inward call; and they witnessed the life of Christ made manifest in them; and from this life they preached and prayed, and gathered the Churches, and they ministered according to the measure of the heavenly gift given unto them of God; they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: And their preaching and teaching was not with words of mans Wisdom, nor stollen from the Mouths and Lives of other men, but in the demonstration of the spirit and power of God, as he spake in them, and gave them utterance; and as they freely received, so they freely gave, and forced none to maintain them; and did take of none, but such as were worthy; and having food raiment, therewith were content: In all which, the Worldly and National Teachers are contrary unto the true Ministers of Christ Jesus. And they plainly declare, they know not Christ within them, they have heard nor seen nothing from the Lord, nor received any inward or immediate call from him, to preach, or teach, but derive their call generally from the Church and Bishop of *Rome*; as is manifest out of their own mouths, and printed Books. Now how can we own such teachers, who know not Christ in themselves, nor his spirit, nor his life, nor his power in their hearts.

For the Lord hath brought us to know Christ in us, and feel, and favour, and taste of his Life and Power; and we have received of his spirit, and the same spirit hath taught us the living knowledge of God, and of Christ; and by the same, many of us have received a living Ministry, and living words of life to speak unto people that minister Life and Grace unto the Hearers; and they give a certain sound, and direct people to a certain and infallible thing, to wit, the principle of the divine Life and Light of Christ Jesus that is in the hearts of all men, that all men may believe in this, join to this, and give Obedience unto it; and whoever do so, they receive the spirit of Christ, and it becometh in them a Well of living water, springing up unto Eternal Life, as many witness at this day, blessed be the name of the Lord for his unspeakable gift: And having found the Fountain of living waters, we can go no more to these broken Cisterns, that can hold no water, to wit, the dead and dry Ministry of the worlds Teachers, that has no life in it, because they preach not from any feeling of the life of Christ in their hearts. And many other things there are which we have to charge upon the worlds Teachers, as reprobable, and contrary to the sound Doctrine of the Gospel, as witnessed in the Scriptures. And certainly if they were indeed spiritual men, and able Ministers of the New Testament, they would have confidence enough to overthrow us, and overcome us (if we were such as they alledge) by their spiritual weapons, and would not so trouble and weary you in crying out to help them against the Quakers with your outward coercive power, as they cryed out of old, helpmen of *Israel.* And if it would please the King, or His Counsel, to cause any of these Teachers openly to meet with us, and appoint such as might fairly and equally hear us, we doubt not, but by the assistance of Christ, we should prove them to be no Ministers of Christ, and their Doctrine in the most weighty and material things; and also their Worship to be contrary unto the Doctrine of Christ and the Apostles, and unto the Worship which Christ set up, which was in spirit and in truth.

And seeing we are at least thus perswaded in our Consciences, why should the King, or any in Authority under Him, seek to force our Consciences to a way that is contrary to our perswasions; we are as true Subjects, and as ready to obey the Kings just Laws, in all civil and temporal respects, and to pay Tribute, as any others we hope in the Nation: And being faithful to God, we cannot be unfaithful to the King; but if we should prove unfaithful to our God, and for fear of suffering, defile our Consciences, and act contrary thereto, we might justly be the more suspected as not like to prove faithful unto men. Therefore let us have the free exercise of our Consciences as Christians, as well as our liberty and freedom as men; for which cause, we are most willing to do all things that belong to us as good and true Subjects: For even the Emperour of the Turks, giveth unto the Christians in his Dominions, the free exercise of their Consciences, they paying their Taxes unto him; and also the Jews were permitted to have their Meetings by *Augustus;* and at this day are permitted by divers Kings, Princes, and Common-wealts: And then why should not we have the same liberty, by and from them that profess the same God and Christ. We have no Idolatrous principles nor practices, nor are we holders forth of any strange God or Christ, nor preachers of any other Doctrine, but the same abundantly witnessed by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

And why should we be hindered to preach and pray in our Meetings; only because we have not a Licence from the Bishop of the Diocese? we question the Bishops own call, and do not believe that it is of God; nor can he instruct it any other way, but by the Popes and Bishops of *Rome*; which all true Protestants should deny, as they did at their first coming forth. He that hath my word, said the Lord, let him speak my word faithfully; he doth not say, provided he hath a Licence from the Bishop of the Diocese: but the Lord hath given unto us his word, and it hath been as a fire in our bones; therefore we could not but speak it; and judge ye your selves, whether we should obey God rather then men: not only the Scriptures testimony, but the testimony of most famous and eminent for Piety and Learning, hath been against using force in the matters of Religion.

This work that is begun among us, is certainly of God; and therefore ye cannot overcome it, no more then ye can hinder the Sea to flow, or the day to spring: therefore O that ye would be wise, and follow *Gamaliels counsel, that ye fight not against God;* for none that fight against him can prosper.

Given forth from the suffering people of God, called Quakers, Prisoners at *Aberden in Scotland.* 16. 11 mon. called January, 1674.

A Copy of this was delivered into the Kings one Hand.